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Zay language

Zay (also **Lak'i**, **Laqi**) is an Afroasiatic language of the Semitic branch spoken in Ethiopia. It is one of the Gurage languages in the Ethiopian Semitic group. The Zay language has around 5,000 speakers known as the Zay, who inhabit Gelila and the other five islands and shores of Lake Zway in the southern part of the country.

Zay	
ዛይኛ, የዛይ አፍ	
Pronunciation	[zaːjɲɲə], [jəzaːj af]
Native to	Ethiopia
Region	Lake Zway
Ethnicity	Zay people
Native speakers	(4,900 cited 1994)[1]
Language family	Afro-Asiatic ▪ Semitic ▪ South Semitic ▪ Ethiopic ▪ South Ethiopic ▪ Transverse ▪ Harari–East Gurage ▪ **Zay**
Writing system	Geʿez script
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	zwa
Glottolog	zayy1238 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/zayy1238)[2]

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Language situation

Zay is an unwritten language. Most speakers are multilingual in other Gurage languages, in the Oromo language, and in Amharic.[3] The language is geographically concentrated around Lake Zway; specifically, in Herera, Meki, Ziway, and the five islands: Fundurro Island (Famat or Getesemani Island) the smallest island; Tsedecha Island (Aysut Island), next to the biggest island; Debre-Tsion Island, the largest island; Gelila Island; and Debre Sina Island. It is an endangered language, with speakers migrating to the mainland adopting the Oromo language, and increasing use of Oromo by the younger generations on the Zay islands.

Map of Ethiopia Showing where Zay is Spoken

Zay is 70% lexically similar with the Silt'e language, and 60% with Harari.[4]

Grammar

The word order of Zay is SOV (subject–object–verb). Attributive adjectives precede the nouns they modify. Possessives also precede nouns.[5] Zay is a pro-drop language, with required subject-marking on the verb.

Zay has been greatly affected by contact it has had with the Oromo language. This contact has created a significant amount of lexical and grammatical change in Zay.[6]

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Further reading

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External links

- Endangered Languages profile for Zay (http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/zwa)
- Audio recordings of Zay (http://globalrecordings.net/en/language/3143)

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